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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0969
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY 1315
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1940
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2209
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RHMFISS/USCENTCOM SPECIAL HANDLING MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 000208

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/YERGER
DEPT FOR EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/11/2018
TAGS: [EAID](#) [MASS](#) [PBTS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IS](#) [LE](#) [SY](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: WATER DISPUTE ALONG LEBANESE/ISRAELI
BORDER

Classified By: DCM William Grant for Reasons: Section 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 5

SUMMARY

12. (C) During a February 6 International Donor Coordination meeting, Lillah Fearnley, a UNIFIL Civil Affairs Officer, briefed the group on a growing water dispute that is raising tensions between Lebanese and Israeli farmers. The dispute is the result of actions by a farmer on the Israeli side of the border and a damaged drainage system on the Lebanese side of the border. In the short term, funding is needed to replace the damaged drainage system. In the long term, a political agreement is needed between Israel and Lebanon on this issue. UNIFIL is strategizing on how to facilitate such an agreement but may need USG help, according to Fearnley. Fearnley said no violent incidences have occurred to date, but warns that tension is increasing in Kafr Kila and that the situation could turn violent at any moment. End Summary.

ISRAELI-LEBANESE WATER DISPUTE
COULD TURN VIOLENT

12. (C) In a February 6 International Donor Security Sector Coordination meeting, Lillah Fearnley, a UNIFIL Civil Affairs Officer, briefed the group on a growing water dispute raising tensions between Lebanese and Israelis farmers along Lebanon's southern border. Fearnley said excess rain water accumulates in the Israeli town of Metulla. The water naturally flows into the Lebanese town of Kafr Kila over time; however, an Israeli farmer in Metulla has decided to speed up the process by pumping the excess runoff into Lebanon, according to Fearnley.

13. (C) Fearnley said the residents of Kafr Kila installed a drainage system in the village to deal with the excess runoff, but the system was destroyed during the 2006 July war. She added that the pumped water is flooding the main road in Kafr Kila every time it rains, which often overflows onto Kafr Kila villagers' properties beside the road flooding crop fields and agricultural lands (Note: This road is known as the Echo road and lies along the Blue Line. End Note.) Fearnley admits that no violent incidents have occurred to

date, but warns that tension is increasing in Kafr Kila and that the situation could escalate at any moment.

¶4. (C) UNIFIL has engineers ready to work on the project, but funding to purchase equipment and other resources is badly needed. She said UNIFIL conducted an initial feasibility study, which estimated the cost of the project at around \$200,000. She noted that a more in depth feasibility study is needed to determine the exact cost of repairing the drainage system. In the long term, a political agreement is needed between Israel and Lebanon on this issue, which UNIFIL is strategizing on how to facilitate, but may need USG help on, according to Fearnley.

ACTION REQUEST

¶5. (C) In response to UNIFIL's request, we will investigate possible sources of funding for this project through funds already available at post. We welcome Department's suggestions or policy guidance on carrying out such a project. POC for this action is C. Jasen Peterson, Political Officer, at 011-961-4-543600 ext. 4229 or at PetersonCJ@state.gov
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